

Why I Am An Agnostic

Is there a God? To the earnest searcher after truth who has left the beaten track of centuries—left its runts and quagmires and boldly ventures into the by-ways that lead he knows not where, to such an one there is the delight that falls to the adventurous and explorer of entering into new and unfamiliar regions—the fairer and ever-brightening vistas of life that spread before the thinking, progressive mind, is in sharp contrast to the blackened landscape of superstition that he has left behind. He travels far perhaps and finds many nuggets of truth—nuggets well tested in the crucible of reason and experience and found genuine, and though enriched by possessions far above gold—possessions that endow with love of nature and good will to men, he is still far from that haven of rest—content. The unknown truth beckons on. He wants more truth. The germ of progress that found lodgment in the brain has grown and become an "expansionist" of potent restless energy, pushing on and on reaching out after new worlds to conquer. It has braved the jungles of superstition and triumphed over creeds. It has slain fear, it has seized and appropriated proof and silenced doubt.

The conquest thus far has been great but the universe is wide. A seemingly shoreless ocean of possibilities lies before. What? And where? All questions merge into one—Is there a God? Some there are who seem to find a satisfactory answer in the partly revealed, partly read book of nature; no, there is no God, being the conclusion I believe of the majority of Liberals; a conclusion carrying with it no doubt a sense of satisfaction and completeness, forming a resting place, as it were, for the searching wanderer. But is he not resting on shifting sands? The tendency of the human mind to belief is strong. The hereditary influence of a thousand ages is not easily outgrown. It is a matter of common observation that people who abandon a belief whether on religion or politics, or anything else, are prone to go to the farthest extreme, not stopping until the opposite is reached. May not this tendency to the opposite partly explain the swing from orthodox to Atheism? A change from one belief to another directly opposite—the impetus of motion carrying one beyond the view point of carrying Rationalism and again on the grounds of credulity and belief. With the Atheist it is the belief that nature as the five senses recognize it, is the all in all—that no God exists. With that belief he stops—with that conviction he ignores the proposition that we have learned but the alphabet of the universe.

But granting that we know more and that we have read many volumes of the library of nature and obtained knowledge of many of her operations, and have beliefs about others, yet as myriads of beliefs have been swept away by the remorseless hand of science, is it not more rational to hold the problems of the universe still in question, granting the uncertainty that generally clings to partial evidence.

Man know thyself is good but we can not claim to be thoroughly acquainted with the ego. Can we claim to be acquainted with all cosmic forces that brought him into being? But thanks to science we are learning. She is constantly giving us new discoveries and hints of things yet undreamed. I for one do not forget that we are laboring under difficulties and limitations (yes lamentations too) we are limited in our knowledge and understanding of many things even under close observation. In our inherited tendency to belief, and it might be added, conceit, shall we presume to have unveiled infinite causation?

Briefly I am an Agnostic because "the more a man learns the more he sees there is to learn." Utterly unable even in boyhood, to accept the Bible God, that hideous monstrosity called Jehovah, I asked might there not be some other kind of God? One that decency could tolerate and reason sanction, some force or intelligence or power that it may be cannot be recognized by the senses perhaps even lying beyond the recognition of reason and understanding in its present stage of unfoldment. I am an Agnostic because nature made me one. The conditions of time and place being favorable to development thus far, with the outlook one of hope that nature may yet yield the great secret and in the shoreless vast of time and space I may yet say "I know" the eternal principle of evolution may solve the problem and give the answer.

B. LEE.

Mulhall, Okla.

Comment.—The circumstances have been, and still are, such that I have had no opportunity to take any part in the very interesting discussion of Atheism that, for some time, has been conducted in the Blade. But the above is so beautifully and conservatively said—though ordinarily I do not like conservatism—that I must trench a little on my time for reading for clerical errors my lately finished new book, in order to give it my hearty sanction.

I am an Atheist. The word Agnostic is not strong enough for me, and, in one sense, I think Huxley made a mistake in inventing that word and that Ingersoll made a mistake in using it to express his own intellectual status as to the existence of a God.

In one sense of the word we are all Agnostics, and Agnostics about everything, because, really, nobody knows—absolutely knows—anything about anything. None of us knows that the world is round, and neither Huxley nor Ingersoll knew that there were no such things as witches.

The Bible says plainly that there are witches and American judges and juries decided from the evidence adduced that there were witches and

executed, as being witches, what seemed only to be old women, as they were plainly directed by the Bible to do.

And yet the world, Christian just as much as Infidel, has concluded there are no such things as witches. And yet there is not a man in the world that can know that there are no witches even at this day.

For all practical purposes, however, we proceed on the supposition that there are no witches, and, just exactly in the same way, while nobody can absolutely know that there is no such existence as the Bible God, as intelligent creatures we ought to proceed upon the supposition that there is none, just as we proceed upon the supposition that there are no witches.

None of us absolutely knows that the world is round and the Bible teaches that it is flat, and yet any man would be very silly at this day, who would base any sort of a business transaction on any hypothesis other than that the world is round. So that, if in discussing the question of the existence of a God we mean by the word the kind of a God described in our Jewish Christian Bible, it seems to me plainly the part of intelligence and integrity to say that there is no God.

To oppose the Christian religion is not merely a matter of interesting debate and intellectual prowess; it is a duty that we owe to humanity and an inalienable right for our self-defense.

I have been for years experimenting in plans of meeting Christian argument—real or so-called—and I have lately, in my travels, had large experience in that line. I have found it most expedient just to say to the Christian apologist that "There is no God," and then when he asks, as he always will do, "Who made the universe?" tell him that it never was made but has existed from all eternity and will exist to all eternity, and this throws him on the defensive, where he legitimately and logically belongs; and there is no ad captandum vulgus about that for that is what science seems to indicate.

But then there are other great minds like Paine, Franklin, Jefferson and Lincoln, who, while they did not, or do not, believe in a God like that one of the Bible, did, or do, believe in a God of nature, and devoutly believe it, and there are bright men like Bro. Lee, here, who think there may be such a God as the God of nature. Strictly speaking, there is no more a God of nature than there is a God of the Bible.

There are laws and principles of nature but it is a misnomer to personify them and call them God; they are nothing but laws and principles of nature that account for all the phenomena of nature without any God of nature any more than a God of the Bible.

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A Family Man For Teddy

President Roosevelt:

Dear Sir—Knowing that in your "strenuous life" you have not time to read carefully all letters sent to you, I call your attention to this open letter written to you from "Coon Creek, West Virginia." Knowing your condition and fears of race suicide, I feel that this letter will, in a measure, allay your fears and cheer you up a bit. Surely this man has done as much for his country as if he had scaled the heights of San Juan. Of course, he had some assistance from the weaker sex, but in increasing the population of this glorious country mothers don't count from a political standpoint when an election is approaching. They are only useful in dignifying the fathers of the country and paying taxes.

As I am a woman and have no vote, but am classed with lunatics, idiots, and criminals, have no political influence and I cannot expect a request of mine to be granted, but I hope you will recognize the services of Ezzy Giddies, and reward him with an office commensurate with them. Surely Ezzy is doing his duty in carrying out the Rooseveltian policy and I feel sure you will after reading the following letter reward him accordingly.

Hoping you will see your way clear to help this "family man" I remain Respectfully Yours,

JOSEPHINE K. HENRY.

Versailles, Ky.

AN OPEN LETTER.
(Chicago Tribune.)

Coon creek west Virginia, Feb. 18th 1892. President of these here Ninit-ed States. Dere sur an frend: Seem by the papers as how you surtenly likes to see a man wot has a big family an that yu inten to do all you can to encourage same, i take my pen in hand to write yu these few lines to let yu know i am well an hope yu are saim at this ritin. As to big families i want to tel you that i ha the biggest in these parts bar none. i have onley bin marrid 2 yeres. i wuz a bachlor untill then. this wuz becom first luv, mary Siddles, got mad at me in the foll of 73 an marrid a feller by the name of jo Doakes, who didn't trete her rite at 91 an she did endure the spring of the pole sez an so i marrid mary after oll. wich bi this time i am ages the smolest being one yere oled an about one foot 2 inches hi. Now wot i want to say is that marys oldest son he got marrid yung an he has 8 childrun an her dotter liz she got marrid to, an she has 7 childrun an now las week wot does her son henry do but run away with the wider jones at the cross rode an she had nine boys an six gurlis by various marriges. so the upshot is that they are oll livin with me an every 1 of them colls me paw. now wot i want is releef, the feller wot has the postoffs here now is a ole bachlor an he has a hairlipp an a crost eye an nobody aint gohn to marry him an i say honor to who hon-

nor is due and help the family man as You say and have sed. If so be as you cant giv me the postoffs meber the government can use me sum other way or you can suggest some thin. oll i want as i say is releef an i want that quick. If it makes it emy stronger i mite add that in my family there is also six dogs an one of them is the best coon dog in the stait an another is a dandy burd dog. Nex time you are in the naburhood come aroun and i will sho you the dogs and the childrun an also sum good huntin country as wel as the postoffs. so no more at present. from yures truly

EZRY GIDDLES.

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DR. POHL SHOWS HOW IT CAN BE DONE.

Buffalo, N. Y., May 4th, 303.

Charles C. Moore:

Dear Sir and Brother—As I am a firm believer in the truthness of the words of our lamented friend Robt. G. Ingersoll, that "The hands that help are better far than lips that pray," I consider your appeal in the Blade for funds to carry on the good

work of that paper best answered by the money order I herewith enclose for five dollars for ten new subscribers. I have today only five names to send you but will not keep you waiting for the other five. Unfortunately I am, like many other liberals, suffering with great want of superfluity of this world's goods; but have an inexhaustible store of energy and good will which I cheerfully place at the disposal of the cause of humanitarianism. I have, now, within a few months, added fifty new subscribers—all paid up—to the Blade. For the information of such who wonder how I do it, I would say, my modus operandi is something like this: I think over the number of my acquaintances where rational independent thinking is being cultivated as part of their daily lives, or, where, upon talking over the matter, so near to my heart, I find them wavering and groping in the twilight of mental awakening; I put their names with addresses on a slip of paper, which I send to the Blade together—this is essential—with the requisite amount to cover subscriptions, which I advance for any such delinquencies as have necessitated this recent appeal of yours to us co-called liberals. Let us be liberal in fact, not only in name. As soon as I think they have received a copy or two of the Blade I make them a friendly visit, put on my suave smile, and say to them: Are you getting a weekly paper, called the Blue Grass Blade? How do you like it? Don't you think it's good, rational reading? Worth 50 cents to you isn't it for the good you can get out of it? It will be an encyclopedia of information to you in helping you to meet in a logical way the silly stock arguments with which the Christian ministers load the old blunderbusses of their unthinking flock to be fired at the defenders of unbelief.

I am invariably reimbursed not only for my financial outlay but with the greater satisfaction of having done something toward rousing the unthinking from their lethargy, teaching them to do a little thinking of their own and having contributed, even if only in a small measure, (for every little helps and tells), toward the mental, moral and physical progress and betterment of this world. That's how I do it. I am convinced if every reader would make a little effort and on every occasion talk up the Blade, explain what we are working for: State: axation of church property; extermination of superstition, etc., its supporters soon would be numbered by tens of thousands. It's a good paper, engaged in doing good work for a noble cause and must not be allowed to die an ignominious death from lack of funds due to inertia an indifference on the part of those whose duty it is to uphold it—morally and financially. The worst criticism I have so far heard upon it was: It's very radical, strong language, but it's good common sense! It certainly is and it's influence is felt wherever it is read; and as a preliminary to independent thought and research it is neutralizing the harmful influence of the fables and falsehoods, the absurd and dangerous superstitions that are assailing and debasing the minds of the masses under the misnomer of the religion of Christ. So fellow liberals, put your shoulders to the wheels, push it along, it's a good thing and, with the stimulating energy of enthusiasm the chariot will win the race and we, who have helped, will share the victory. Don't let Christians sneer and triumphantly say: There's not enough life left in the Freethought movement in this great land of liberty to support a Freethought paper. Shame the thought!

Enclose a short obituary of Stuart Robson, the actor—another infidel who has done much to gladden the hearts of humanity.

With good wishes that all will come out satisfactorily.

GUSTAV A. POHL, M. D.

Comment.—Some time, in the last year, I saw the printed statement of some Christian propagandist that a canvass of the city of Buffalo had been made with a view of obtaining its religious status and that there were only thirteen infidels in that city.

That certainly was discouraging for an infidel propagandist, and in a city like that where there lived such personal friends of Ingersoll as Dr. Wetmore and his wife who is also a Doctor.

I knew that Dr. Wetmore was an invalid, and I could not reasonably expect him to do much propagandism.

Now right on top of these facts Dr. Pohl undertakes to help the Blade and gets 50 subscribers for it and says he has lost no money in doing so, and has enjoyed it.

I do not count myself anything in this matter. My friends have already done, for me, far more than I deserve. But Dr. Pohl sees that he is under just as much obligation to help in this work as Mr. Hughes is, and it seems to me that there certainly ought to be among all the readers of the Blade not less than 1,000 men and women who can do as Dr. Pohl has done.

You all must learn to make some sacrifice.

Please, all of you who call yourselves friends of this paper, try to do something to emulate the grand example of Dr. Pohl.

CENTRAL CHURCH

Struck By Lightning Sunday And Tower Damaged.

During the thunder storm Sunday lightning struck the tower on the Central Christian church and damaged it to the extent of several dollars. A number of bricks and stones were knocked off and several loosened. It is dangerous to walk along Short street near the church as more are very apt to fall. The damage will be repaired in a few days.—Lexington Leader.

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All watches guaranteed new, perfect; cases latest designs, hand chased (no die-work "engraving") and accompanied by m'f's and my guarantee. I pay freight, and watches kept in order one year if well used.

Send for prices of ladies' 16 size, solid gold, silver and other watches not listed above, Diamonds, Opals, Silver, Plated and Optical goods, Music Boxes, Jewelry, Chains, Clocks, Freethought and other badges, Ingersoll Spoons and my tract "Theism in the Crucible," free.

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Correspondence and inquiries are given our prompt attention.

lightning does not prove that God is trying to destroy a church—does not even prove that there is any God. But it is a fact that the people of Lexington can only recall two cases in which lightning has struck houses in that town, and the only other instance is when the lightning struck the steeple on the Catholic church on Limestone street, and burnt the steeple off of it. Right diagonally across the street from that church is the saloon of Tom Lyons, a Catholic Irishman, who for years has been a friend of this paper, and whose business conducted at that same place, for many years before that church was built there, that church tried by law to suppress, because, the church said, Tom's business interfered with the religious services of that church.